

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA MEETS WITH NORTH AMERICAN JEWISH
LEADERS

REF: MEXICO 11028

1. UNCLASSIFIED: PRESIDENT LUIS ECHEVERRIA'S UNUSUAL MEETING DEC. 12 WITH ABOUT TWENTY U.S., CANADIAN, AND MEXICAN JEWISH LEADERS RECEIVED PROMINENT PAGE-ONE COVERAGE IN ALL MEXICO CITY DAILIES DEC. 13. THE NEWS ACCOUNTS ALL PORTRAY THE MEETING AS A SUCCESS IN ELIMINATING THE "MISUNDERSTANDING" OVER MEXICO'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS ZIONISM.

2. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, THE JEWISH DELEGATION HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH WAS REPORTED IN TOTO BY SOME PAPERS AND EXTENSIVELY QUOTED BY THE REST. SEYMOUR GRAUBARD, SPOKEMAN FOR THE GROUP AND PRESIDENT OF B'NAI B'RITH, MADE THE FOLLOWING SALIENT POINTS DURING THIS CONFERENCE:

(A) "ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF THIS INTERVIEW" (WITH PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA);

(B) THERE WAS NO ORGANIZED BOYCOTT OF TOURISM TO
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MEXICO BY AMERICAN AND CANADIAN JEWS, BUT RATHER A

SPONTANEOUS REACTION BY JEWS AND OTHERS AGAINST NOT ONLY MEXICO BUT ALSO THE OTHER NATIONS WHICH VOTED FOR THE ANTI-ZIONISM RESOLUTION;

(C) AS A RESULT OF THEIR TALK WITH THE PRESIDENT, THE DELEGATION CAN RETURN HOME AND STATE THAT MEXICO HAD NEVER INTENDED TO EQUATE ZIONISM WITH RACISM;

(D) THE PRESIDENT EXPLAINED THAT MEXICO VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE UN RESOLUTION ON ZIONISM "BECAUSE HE THOUGHT THAT THIS MEASURE COULD BE A GIANT STEP FORWARD WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE" IN THE MIDDLE EAST; AND

(E) THE JEWISH GROUP HAD NOT ASKED FOR AN INVITATION TO VISIT MEXICO BUT RATHER WAS DOING SO "AT THE REQUEST OF FORMER PRESIDENT MIGUEL ALEMAN."

3. IN ADDITION, A REPORTER ASKED WHETHER WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID MEANT MEXICO WILL CHANGE ITS VOTE TOWARD RESOLUTIONS EQUATING ZIONISM WITH RACISM OR MERELY VOTE FOR THESE AND EXPLAIN ITS VOTE. GRAUBARD EXPLAINED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW THE GOM'S INTENTIONS. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION, MRS. ROSE MATZKIN, ADDED THAT THE GROUP WAS CERTAIN THAT THERE WILL BE NO MORE MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT MEXICO'S VIEWS ON ZIONIM BECAUSE THEY WERE SURE THAT A GENTLEMAN LIKE ECHEVERRIA WOULD NOT GIVE THEM ASSURANCES ONLY TO NEGATE THESE LATER.

4. WHILE THE MORE HEAVILY GOM INFLUENCED PRESS (EL NACIONAL AND EL SOL) PRAISED THIS MEETING AND ALSO RABASA'S RECENT VISIT TO ISRAEL FOR CLARIFYING MEXICO'S TRUE VIEWS ON ZIONISM, MANY COLUMNISTS IN OTHER PAPERS REMAINED CRITICAL OF GOM'S ZIGZAGGING POLICY. AN EXCELSIOR COLUMNIST, NOTING THAT A "FOREIGN TRAVEL AGENT" (SIC) HAD GIVEN THE PRESS THE ONLY GOM EXPLANATION OF MEXICO'S VOTE ON ZIONISM, CONCLUDED THAT IT IS TIME FOR THE GOM ITSELF TO EXPLAIN THE MATTER TO THE MEXICAN PUBLIC. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: ALL IN ALL, IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY WEEK. THE GOM WENT TO GREAT, ALMOST CONFIDENTIAL

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HUMILIATING LENGTHS TO GET ITS MESSAGE ACROSS. THE JEWISH LEADERS REPORTED THAT THEY HAD TURNED DOWN TWO PRIOR INVITATIONS TO VISIT MEXICO AND MEET WITH ECHEVERRI AND ONLY ACCEPTED THE THIRD INVITATION BECAUSE OF THE INSISTENCE WITH WHICH IT WAS MADE. MOREOVER, THE ISRAELIS FELT THAT RABASA WAS SO ANXIOUS TO MEET WITH AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS WHO WERE ALSO VISITING ISRAEL LAST WEEK, THAT HE MIGHT HAVE TIMED HIS VISIT TO COINCIDE WITH THEIRS.

6. THE GYRATIONS OF ZIONISM, LIKE THOSE ON BELIZE, HAVE MADE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF ECHEVERRIA'S FOREIGN POLICY LOOK ILL-CONCEIVED AND RATHER AMATEURISH. NOT ONLY HAS HE REVERSED GOM POLICY ON BOTH THESE ISSUES WITHIN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, BUT IN THE CASE OF ZIONISM, HE DID SO IN A MANNER WHICH SUGGESTED THAT THIS WAS MORE OF A HASTY RESPONSE TO FOREIGN PRESSURE (I.E. THE LOSS OF INCOME FROM TOURIS) THAN A CORRECTION OF A POLICY ERROR MADE AFTER CAREFUL REFLECTION. ALL OF THIS HAS NATURALLY TARNISHED ECHEVERRIA'S IMAGE SOMEWHAT. CYNICAL FOREIGN OBSERVERS PRIVATELY SAY THAT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ARE NOT REALLY HIS FORTE, PAST "SUCCESSES" (CERDS, SELA, ETC.) NOTWITHSTANDING. EVEN THE NORMALLY TAME MEXICAN PRESS IS INCREASINGLY CRITICIZING AND QUESTIONING GOM FOREIGN POLICY. WHO MAKES IT? WHO INFLUENCES IT? WHAT ARE ITS GOALS? ALL OF THIS CANNOT BUT DISMAY THOSE WHO MAY STILL SUPPORT ECHEVERRIA FOR UN SECRETARY GENERAL.
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